

THE SCEPTRE

DECEMBER

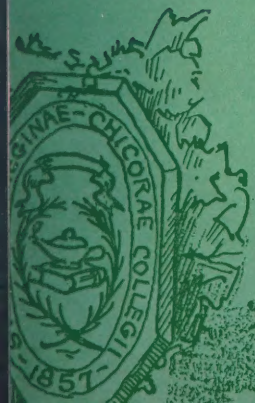
1932

CAROL REEVES

KATHERINE McLESKEY

JO DANDRIDGE

MARY MURRAY



The SCEPTRE

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*"Hark! the herald angels sing
Peace on earth, good will to men."*

What better tidings could have come to Queens-Chicora than the news that we had been accepted into the Southern Association? Coming as it did between Thanksgiving and Christmas, it completed our feeling of thanksgiving and rejoicing. It is the culmination of all our hopes; the prize that shows our labors have not been in vain.

We must not, however, be content to rest on our laurels. Because we have run the race and reached the goal, we must not think that for an instant we can stop. We could no longer be proud of ourselves if we progressed no further. Our achievement must not be regarded as the end, but rather as a milestone. It must be a stimulus, rather than a reward.

The responsibility for our further advancement lies heavily on every one connected with Queens-Chicora, on every organization, on every organ of publication. *The Sceptre* meets the challenge. It is eager in every way to help and to reflect the greater college. It would remind the students that we are known by what we do. The other colleges know us by what we publish and send to them. It, then, behooves us to contribute to and otherwise support the *Sceptre*. That will be one of the ways we can prove that we are worthy of the confidence just placed in us; one of the ways we can help build a stronger and better Alma Mater.

THE EDITOR.





STREET ON XMAS EVE

It was Xmas Eve on the Street—

And children were everywhere.

They pressed red-button noses to every window square,

*And scrubbed the frosted panes to make a place through which to
stare;*

They eyed the grocer's turkey prize, hung high in naked splendor,

And gulped the rich, brown bak'ry smells that trailed the cookie vendor;

They sniffed the green-piled fragrance of unbought Xmas trees,

*And sneaked the scarlet holly balls from ragged, prick-edged
wreaths;*

They rimmed each baggy Santa round, and drowned his tinkling call,

With eager shouts of "drums and dolls, and candy canes for all";

They jostled bundle-hid grown-ups, and slid the ice-humped street,

And tracked the brittle, powdered walk, with stubby-patterned feet.

It was Xmas Eve on the Street—

And children were everywhere.

—CAROL REEVES.

**Eight-thirty
Fancies**

Edith Caldwell Storm

HERE it stands—the fairies' crystal palace. They are not so careful to hide their winter castles as they are the fairy rings in summer. On bright cold mornings, we can see them glistening in the sun, their rainbow hues sparkling. They build endless ones, lest we discover the one they occupied the night before.

Through the vaulted halls like spun glass, the fairy court winds its way to its nightly dance. The queen is gowned in the skins of mistle-toe berries. Tight-fitting, the pearly sheath outlines the dainty figure who is taller than her subjects. Have you seen the irridescent jewels on blades of grass before the sun is well up? These are the jewels her majesty wears in her long golden hair. The king at her side is robed in the scarlet satin of holly berries. The courtiers are dressed in the red and white of the berries of the dogwood tree. The elves, those merry, merry fellows, have discarded their shields of robins' eggs and are attired in the ruby coats of the japonica berries with one big round black button on the front.

You do not believe the hoar frost is a fairy palace? Step on it, crush its walls. Do you feel the spell cast on destroyers? The numbness in your feet? The spell is slow, but insidious and sure. The elves, red-breeched, are not content, but add their bit to discomfort the marauding mortal. They bite and pinch the noses and fingers and cheeks. Proof? They leave behind a bit of red from their garments.



DUSK HOUR

*When Dusk leans on my garden gate,
And tilts her purple lips
To drain the ruffled flower cups,
With dainty, honeyed sips—
I stare into her shadowed face,
That beckons me and calls—
And see the snowballs gleam,
Like fairy popcorn balls.*

—CAROL REEVES.

Four

IT seemed that the negroes were the only ones who really understood the Little Boy, or it may have been that they were the only ones who didn't puzzle over him. Negroes and animals accepted him as he was, and asked no questions.

All the Grown-ups—his parents and aunts and uncles—worried and worried over him; they couldn't understand.

"Mammy, it bothers me so, that he doesn't play like other little boys his age do. And he's so serious."

"Now, Miss, you oughten' worry. He's jes' diffunt. And you don' want him to be like ev'ybody else. De way he does is nachel fo' him, an' he's gonna get along mighty well when he grows up. Anybody'd know dat to see de way de animal-things follows him around and loves him. Sho he's diffunt, but you jes' leave him alone."

Mammy had advised his mother this same way throughout the five years of the Little Boy's life. She was very confident in his safety, but she was the only one who had seen what he did that Christmas Eve when he was only a few minutes old. After she had bathed him and was wrapping him in soft woolen blankets, he had turned his tiny head and looked out a window. Straight at the Christmas Star he had looked, for the longest time—until Mammy had grown uneasy and had laid him in his mother's arms. Mammy had never told that to anyone, but she would have to tell his mother soon, to keep her from werrin'. Here he was almos' five years ol'—would be five to-morrow night, and his mother werried more all de time. Said he was diffunt. Humph! Better be glad he was.

Mothers are always busy on Christmas Eve, so the Little Boy's mother put him to bed early. She told him the story of how he had been born five years before, that very night. And then she kissed him and went back to her work. It was late when she got ready for bed and went in to see about him.

He wasn't in his bed, nor by the window where she sometimes found him looking at the winter stars. She hunted him through the upstairs, calling his name very softly. She hunted him through the downstairs. He was not there.

She ran to his father and told him. He got the negroes out to hunt.

Christmas Eve

Katherine McLeskey

For hours in the clear, crisp cold of that Christmas Eve they searched and called.

Christmas Eve

Finally his mother went down to the barns to saddle her horse, and ride to the Little Boy's favorite haunts on the farm. She slipped quickly into the stable, among the sweet-smelling hay. It was warm in there, and the horses and cattle made friendly sounds as they chewed in the darkness.

A few moments later, while the cocks were crowing the hour of midnight, the other searchers found her there in the midst of the animals, as they knelt about her. Her hair was falling down over the soft robe she wore. Star light from a window made a halo around the head of her sleeping Son, as he lay in her arms.



LEAVES

*I saw the leaves of autumn fall
Go swirling, twirling down
To mingle with the other leaves
Already on the ground.*

*I felt my love grow weak and die
Go out with ebbing tide
To mingle with the other loves
That I had laid aside.*

*I saw the leaves of winter lie
All shriveled, dry, and dead
Just like my brief and worthless love
From which the life had fled.*

*And then I saw the leaves of spring
So green and fresh and new.
They didn't fade, they didn't fall
They ever grew and grew.*

—VIRGINIA E. SAMPSON.

THROUGH the ages certain comedy characters have personified the humor of life in such a way that they are indelible. The origin of some of them extends beyond the span of written records. Harlequin, Pierrot, and Scaramouche are three of the most interesting characters which are as amusing today in their modified and modernized costumes as they were centuries ago.

**The Lore of
Harlequin,
Pierrot, and
Scaramouche**
Jo Dandridge

The most ancient of all comedians is Harlequin. He leaps across the stage today with the same vivacity he had two thousand years ago. He has retained the essential features of his make-up; but as he jumped from the stage of one century to another, he picked up some tempting ornament from the costume of one age or was presented with some symbolic decoration of another.

When Harlequin impersonated an African slave twenty centuries ago, he smeared his face with soot and wore tight-fitting goat or tiger skin; now he wears a mask and parti-colored and spankled tights. At his first appearance, his head was shaved; today he wears a black skullcap. When he made his first bow, he wore socci (the low, light shoe or sock of comedy) in order that he might make himself as short as possible and not obstruct the spectator's view of the tragedians, who wore high, thick-soled boots, or "buskins," and performed backstage. The modern Harlequin wears thin kid pumps.

The fluttering pennant that Harlequin sometimes wears above his ear represents a rabbit's tail which he acquired during the fifteenth century because of his proneness to turn tail and run from danger. Henry III of France, presented the popular impersonator of Harlequin of his day with a dilapidated hat that had become too small for the royal cranium; hence the headdress.

At one time, Harlequin was known as Trevelino, meaning "wearer of rags," because of his position as valet to a stingy doctor who passed on his discarded garments to Harlequin. During that time his wardrobe consisted mostly of numerous colored and odd-shaped patches sewed on a flimsy foundation. These patches took the shape of diamonds during the seventeenth century. Since then, there has been but one alteration—the transformation of the diamond into the long, narrow lozenge.

**The Lore of
Harlequin,
Pierrot, and
Scaramouche**

The most famous Harlequin and the first comedian to popularize the character was an Italian actor, Guiseppe-Domenico Biancolelli, known as "Dominique." His cleverness so impressed Cardinal Mazarin, who saw him perform in Vienna in 1659, that he induced the comedian to join the Italian comedy troupe then in Paris. There his wit, charming personality, and excellent interpretation soon made him a court favorite and the idol of the theatre-goers.

Pierrot is a mere upstart when ranked with Harlequin; however, he is considered Harlequin's foster brother. He made his first appearance at the end of the sixteenth century and has been known by the names of Pedrolino, Peppe-Nappa (in Sicily), Pagliaccio, Gilles, and finally Pierrot.

It is said that Molière is responsible for the adoption of this character by the comedies. Harlequin had been represented as a dull, slow-witted, and stupid person until the time Dominique played the part. As a result of Dominique's well-bred and intellectual impersonation, Harlequin lost his heaviness and sluggishness. The comedies needed a simpleton, so Molière made Pierrot take the part. In order to convey the impression that he was a clod and a rogue, Molière dressed him in the white linen worn by the French peasant of the time. To this day, Pierrot wears the white costume and still plays the part of a shy, lackadaisical rustic.

The character that is always trying to impress those about him with his own importance is not new to the theatre. This type character is amusing because he deceives nobody but himself with his bombastic boasts. During the days of Italian comedy, he was cast under the name of Le Capitan. Since then, the character has appeared as Scudery, as Cyrano de Bergerac (in a modified form), as Tartarin, and at the present time in types like the "Show-Off."

Originally Le Capitan wore a conspicuous costume of broad green and yellow stripes. He adopted the Spanish style during the seventeenth century and dressed in black from head to foot. He always carried the longest rapier used by armorers of his period and fought with his eyes shut because the sight of his adversaries was repulsive to him. He was always boasting of his conquests of hearts, but in reality he was a coward, a thief, and a most unsuccessful gallant.

Tiberio-Fiurelli was the most successful impersonator of this character. So popular was his interpretation that his stage name, "Scaramouche," eventually took the place of Le Capitan.

The son of a cavalry captain, Scaramouche spent a checkered and inglorious youth and finally joined a troupe of Italian actors. His skill as a dancer soon brought him fame, and he was invited to join the Italian players in Paris. It was there that his friendship with Louis the Great was formed—a friendship which lasted for fifty years. When the king was two years old, Scaramouche had orders to appear every evening at the bedtime hour and to amuse him with funny faces, weird noises, and the music of his guitar.

Harlequin, Pierrot, and Scaramouche made their first bow on the stage of comedy centuries ago. They have amused countless audiences and have played their parts well.

The Lore of
Harlequin,
Pierrot, and
Scaramouche

●

AS A MAN THINKETH—

*My thoughts are but a monotone today.
Grey, lifeless things, and dull,
They give no joy—and yet no pain.
Like soldiers' feet on flagged streets
They come and go, and then
Are lost.*

*It was not always thus,
For yesterday they danced ecstatically
Or tread a funeral dirge.
It mattered then that skies were blue,
That birds could sing—and life was good.*

*But last night when I slept I dreamed
And in the dreaming something broke.
I dreamed that one who means the most to me
Had somehow failed to measure up
To that ideal that I had set for her,
So, when I woke my heart slept on.*

—FRITZ RALEY.

TANGO MELODY

*Weird, wavering strains of the tango
Dash away
To meet the lurking shadows
In the woods beyond;
And in the circle of a camp-fire's glare
Red and yellow 'kerchiefed heads
Nod lazily, to the
Tinkle of the cymbals
And a violin's whining cry.
Into the flickering radiance of the fire
A swarthy youth drags an unwilling maid
Into the whirl and swirl of the
Gypsy dance; around they go while
On his face jealousy, love and hate
Are flashed.
Like the lights upon the shadows
Her face betrays her twinkling feet.
A hush, and then the heavy silence is broken
Into fragments by a scream
As a flashing blade sinks down
Into her breast—
While into the night an astonished melody
Fades away.*

—BETTIE WICKER.



WHERE is Edisto? How large is it? Is it really an island? These and other quite amusing questions greet the ears of those who live on a seacoast island. I am reminded, as I write, of an incident that happened to me a few days ago. While I was discussing surf-bathing on Edisto Island, a listener asked in a rather bewildered voice, "Well, is the Island on the ocean, or on a river?" When I answered that it bordered the ocean and was cut off from the mainland by a river, he was quieted.

To answer the questions, Edisto is one of a group of three islands on the South Carolina coast, near Charleston. It is, as I have said, on the Atlantic Ocean, cut off from the mainland by the Edisto River, which branches at Island, to form the Dawhoo River. The approach to the Island is a causeway about three miles long, over marsh and water. A drawbridge spans the river, which is part of the inland waterway to Florida. Often we must wait fifteen minutes at the open draw for a pretty yacht to pass.

The Island is about twelve miles long, by six miles wide; so we really do not have the waves lapping up on our back steps. However, small rivers cut into the Island from all directions; and each home is on a river, which gives easy access to such pleasures as swimming, fishing, and boating. There is enough woodland on the Island to furnish shelter for many different kinds of animals; therefore, hunting is often indulged in. One of the chief fall and winter sports is deer hunting. About ten or fifteen men go at five o'clock on a cold winter morning to one of the beaches, where some stand at a "post" all day, while others ride horses, to return at five in the late afternoon—usually with a piece of venison. The hunter killing his first deer has its blood smeared on him and his clothes. This is the "thrill."

Unwary ducks on their southward flight for winter are often killed on the rivers. At this time of the year, one may be awakened by the sound of shots over the water, and with the evidence of a very high tide, we know the peace of some marsh hen's family is being disturbed.

In summer these same rivers afford our chief pleasure. Swimming parties are constant. The young people from several families on the same river meet at a central place, any hour of the day, for a "swim."

**Life on
Edisto Island**
Mary Murray

**Life on
Edisto Island**

The place may be a wharf at high tide, so diving can be added; or it may be a sand bank in the middle of the river, at low tide.

Another question always arises in the minds of listeners, as it probably will in yours, when it is said that the last census gave a population of 1800, 300 of whom are white, the rest negroes. At the question, "Oh, what if the negroes should rise in mutiny?" I usually smile, as I think of the peaceful, lazy existence of the Island negroes. It can be said of many of them, "They do not know the war is over." If anything should happen, the 300 people would "stick together," for they are all related, if some of them do have to go as far as fourth cousin. Very few, however, need claim that distance, for we find it a happy "large family" affair. It has been said at times that we people are a little distant to strangers until they become one of the "family." Very seldom is the hospitality of the Island questioned, for we are true Southerners. We still cling to the custom of large dinner parties, where we have an abundant supply of food. Christmas to me is a happy gathering of aunts and uncles for a jolly time.

The old stately homes on the Island are monuments to three or four generations ago—pre-Civil War times. The beauty of many places—that is their lovely, rambling flower gardens—was destroyed during the War, but the large brick houses stood staunchly before the Yankees. "Brick House," which burned three years ago, claimed that its bricks were brought from England, for it dates to pre-Revolutionary times. In recent years a few homes of the bungalow type have dotted the Island.

Would you be surprised to ride from the Dawhoo River Bridge, where you enter the Island on the main Public Road, to the beach, which is at the other end of the twelve miles, and not see more than two homes? Well, that is exactly what would happen should you visit Edisto. You would notice many narrow "avenues," as they are called, leading from this Public Road, and you would sometimes have to follow them two miles to reach the homes you are seeking. Why is this? Originally, our only mode of travel from the Island was by water, and for this reason, the homes had to be built on rivers. Now we revel in the privacy these avenues give us. Each home is on a plantation of from a few hundred to maybe a thousand acres.

Truck farming is the means of livelihood, since cotton became unprofitable years ago with the boll weevil. The cultivation of vegetables necessitates a quick outlet for the produce, therefore freight boats ply the rivers between Charleston and the Islands, since there is no railroad connection to Edisto. These boats have taken the place of the passenger boats of a generation ago, that took our parents on vividly-remembered excursions. With the changing times we have allowed the highway to connect the Island with the mainland.

Life on Edisto Island

Life on the Island, for the most part, is free, peaceful and happy. A stranger is immediately recognized when set in the midst of the Island gathering, which takes place late each afternoon at the Post Office. But he will find a warm welcome and a "handshake," as he stands by in amazement, while everyone is greeted with a kiss. That's where being related comes in!



SONG OF THE RIVER WIND

*The cold wind is lashing the reeds in the river,
Making of them a flail
The wind trundles under the wooden bridge
And beats down the young rice in the mud—
Muddy beneath a grey sky.
And grasps the growth of bamboo on the banks,
Becoming tangled in the thick, feathery mass.
Then, spewed out in a thousand pieces,
The cold wind dashes back into the river
To stir the cold white stones and the sand,
And blow a bleak gust on the scabby hull
Of an old sunken sanpan that lifts from the water.*

—REBEKAH LOCKLIN HASSELL.

**The
Seventh Moon**
Ione Smith

IT was the seventh day and the seventh moon. Attractive signs, painted cartoons, hanging lanterns, paper money, and favored idols all decorated the counters of a small, one roomed shop which fronted on a narrow, crowded, cobble stone street. Old women and little children, farmers and merchants, storekeepers and venders; all were having a gay time walking the streets in the best clothes they could afford. Fire crackers frightened evil spirits away and burning incense appeased the anger of the gods.

But now evening had come and stars were appearing. Each shopkeeper slid long, wooden planks across the entrance to his store. No more purchasers ambled along the dark streets, for there was no light except starlight and a few candle flickers that sneaked between the cracks of the wooden boards. The streets were still damp with the heavy rainfall of the afternoon, but now the sky was clear and the Milky Way could be seen between the rifts of the clouds. It was such an appropriate day for the celebration of the Spinning Maiden's Festival.

The Maiden had lived all of her life by the Milky Way spinning and weaving the silk threads that spun the clouds. Diligent labor did not keep her from being lonesome, so her father, the King of Heaven, allowed her to travel in one of her clouds to visit the Herdsman of the Heavenly Meadow. But these open fields were still too isolated a place to live, so the Herdsman and his Maiden went to wander among the trees and fields of earth. The beauty of the green flowers and blossoming branches entranced them for a while, but their roaming minds couldn't be content. She longed to go back to her little cottage by the Milky Way. But when they did go back, she had no more interest in weaving the clouds; and the Herdsmen neglected his cattle. The King of Heaven was much annoyed at their slothfulness, whereupon he consulted with the Western Royal Mother. The two must be separated was the verdict, so the Mother took her silver hairpin and with one stroke changed the Milky Way into a Heavenly River. Separation was too hard for the lovers to bear, so the parents allowed them to visit each other once a year. Fate was against them, for at each appointed time the river would become too swift and cross-

ing was impossible. Strong winged magpies had always been her friends, and now they came to help their lovely Maiden in her distress. "Take me across the river," she wailed. "That's a simple matter, lovely maiden," and all the magpies hovered over the river, wing to wing, making a strong bridge for her dainty feet. The visit was all too short, the day for separation soon came. Tears were in his eyes, the Maiden began to weep, and their tears fell in copious showers.

The rain encouraged the farmers, their crops began to grow; celebrations and festivities were numerous. This is the cause of the heavy rainfall that comes annually about the seventh day of the seventh moon.

The Seventh Moon

—A LEGEND.

A CUP OF TEA

*A cup of tea . . . a steaming cup . . .
A little thing to conjure up
So many thoughts, so many things . . .
A sadness to my heart it brings.*

*The shady paths and lanes we walked;
The things of interest that we talked.
That time we met and sat so still
To hear the distant whip-poor-will.*

*Your ready wit and well-turned phrase . . .
Your quirky smile and steadfast gaze . . .
The slimness of your legs so long . . .
Your mind and body, clean and strong . . .*

*A look into a baby's bed;
A kiss upon a little head . . .
The night you left me, strangely cold,
With half of life as yet untold.*

*Your pens and paper and your books
Left like your clothes, scarecrows on hooks . . .
When all that life seems but a dream,
I'll know you liked one lump and cream.*

—EDITH CALDWELL STORM.

**A Chinese
Phantasy**
Virginia Sampson

MR. Clarence Willard strolled leisurely down a narrow, back street in Nanking. His present occupation was gathering Chinese ornaments for the firm of Chatterton and Son. A certain costly, cloisonne urn had recently disappeared from the storehouse, and Clarence Willard was out in search of it. It was reported that the urn was at one time the possession of an old Chinese emperor who had given it at his death to a trusty servant as a good luck charm. Tradition had it that there was also an exquisitely carved teak-wood standard that belonged with the urn, but this had not been bought with the urn. This ancient urn had not been in the collection house more than a day when it disappeared, which fact accounted for Mr. Willard's present expedition.

Chinese streets have their charms in spite of the squalor and odors. Willard rambled on forgetful of his purpose in fascination of the surroundings. Sleek, slant-eyed children played in the streets, while old men smoked their pipes dreamily in oblivion of his progress. Young men padded noiselessly by and vanished into some dark hole in the wall. Suddenly Willard started, jerked back to reality by the familiarity of the figure of a Chinese in front. It was Faillou, a collecting member of the firm who was due to be in Tsing-Tsing on important business for the next two days.

Hardly conscious that he was heeding the voice of that intuition which had been so useful to him in searching for treasures of the East, Willard began to follow him. Faillou seemed to be so engrossed in his thoughts that he appeared unconscious of his follower. After a few minutes, he turned down a black alley; and having progressed a way through its intricate turns, he knocked on the wall of a house. A door swung open, and he issued into a small room, richly hung with choicest tapestries and furnished with treasured jewels, jades, cloisonne, and rare woods. Willard hesitated. Should he enter? It would probably entail a risk, but he had an idea that Faillou knew something about the missing urn; if not that, then about something else. He stepped warily over the threshold; the door swung noiselessly shut, leaving nothing behind but a blank wall. Faillou had disappeared, and any means of exit had been blocked. Willard began to feel slightly panicky. He knocked and sounded the

A Chinese
Phantasy

walls in vain for a hidden door. He turned, finally to examine the room. A peculiar light pervaded, turning alternately from a purplish hue to green. Look where he might, he could discover no source of this light. Clouds of incense hung heavily, making the air stifling.

Then suddenly a voice came to him from heaven knows where, Willard did not, saying, "This is the abode of the Cloisonne Urn. This urn is the Chinese emblem of good luck. It is known that you are in search of it. Beware! For he who again goes forth from this place with this urn will never return to tell of his experience. There is a door to your left which is opened by four knocks on the small table in front. Depart with your life, but never come again, or . . ." The voice died away.

So this was the way they intended to get rid of him. Any way he knew where to find the urn; he could return with ample forces to retrieve it. He crossed to the table and in doing so tripped over one of the heavy rugs. As he fell forward, he grasped the table and pulled it with him. The effect was instantaneous. A whole side of the wall slid down into the flooring. There was the cloisonne urn enthroned on a sort of altar in the shape of a huge green dragon. Did his eyes deceive him? The peculiar light that had puzzled him was issuing mystically from the urn. Without thinking and overcome with desire for the thing, he reached out and snatched it to him. A sweet lassitude spread through his limbs. He had found the one thing he wished for. Now he knew why he had come. It had been the voice of the Cloisonne Urn calling him. He felt himself sinking, sinking, floating lightly downward.



TRIOLET

*The senior's thoughts are of seventeen
The humorist near forty-nine.
In all the college verse I've seen
The senior's thoughts are of seventeen.
I know not much of the years between,
But the later years, to wit incline
The senior's thoughts are of seventeen
The humorist near forty-nine.*

—MARION TOWNEND.

Seventeen



Among the Authors



"Obscure
Destinies"
Dean McLean

WILLA Cather's latest literary production, "Obscure Destinies," runs true to form, showing the understanding heart, clearness of vision, sincerity of thought, and simplicity of diction which are her characteristics as a writer.

Three separate short stories make up the content of the volume; three pictures of life in as many small western localities. Neighbor Rosicky, whose name is given to the first picture, is a Bohemian who as a lad goes to London seeking something better than is likely to fall to his lot in his own country on the continent. What he finds is a place in the poverty-stricken home of a tailor with whom he stays long enough to learn the trade. He then crosses the ocean to New York where for some years he lives happily, though frugally. Finally he loses interest in the crowded city and longs to see a more generous expanse of sky, have a fuller measure of God's sunshine. He begins to save and at thirty-five goes west, manages to buy some land, build a house, and found a family. The atmosphere of this prairie home, its affectionate contentment, the outcome of right relations between parents and children; its essential hominess, bears a strong likeness to the interior drawn by Jean Ingelow in "Supper at the Mill."

Miss Cather thus describes the family group: "Comfortable, out of debt, but they didn't get much ahead. People as generous, as warm hearted as the Rosickys never get much ahead. Maybe you couldn't enjoy life and put it into the bank too."

"Old Mrs. Harris" in the second of the three sketches, sells the home in Tennessee in which she has spent so many years contentedly as its mistress, and goes with her married daughter to a Colorado village and becomes the drudge of the family. Victoria Templeton, the daughter, and Vickie, the granddaughter, are self-centered rather than actively selfish; but the result is the same so far as Mrs. Harris is concerned. To her lot falls the least desirable room in the too small house, the hardest bed, the lack of everything which means comfort to a woman of her age and former life. But her compensation she finds in the little boys, her love for them and their love for her.

She rises stiff and tired each morning to prepare their breakfast, which they take at an earlier hour than their parents. When they appear "the tired, solitary old woman Grandmother had been at daybreak vanished; suddenly the morning seemed as important to her as to the children and the mornings ahead stretched out sunshiny, important."

"Obscure
Destinies"

The third picture, that of "The Two Friends," is drawn by a man who as a lad knew these friends, liked and admired them, and learned much from their words which fell upon his attentive ears. In a small Kansas town they lived, the banker-merchant and the cattleman. Inseparable, they played checkers in the store on winter nights, and in summer sat on the sidewalk talking or, as fast friends may, maintaining a silence broken only by an occasional word. Promptly at the closing hour, ten o'clock, they arose and went their separate ways. The two men "were in their best form on moonlit summer nights and their talk covered a wide range." To this the lad listened, sitting on the curb, his eyes fixed on the faces of the speakers or wandering to the dusty road transformed by the silvery light into a ribbon-like line of velvet softness.

Eventually, however, there came a rift within the lute of this friendship—the cause a difference in politics; the harmony of the instrument was broken, never to be restored.

The author conducts this group of characters through the Valley of the Shadow. Rosicky passes suddenly and is laid to rest in the little burial ground at the edge of his own small homestead. The doctor who had warned him of his weak heart, feels, in driving by, that "nothing could be more undeathlike than this place; nothing could be more right for a man who had helped to do the work of great cities and had always longed for the open country and had got it at last. Rosicky's life seemed to him complete and beautiful."

Mrs. Harris lies down upon her hard bed, repeating, as is her nightly custom, "The Lord is my shepherd . . ." In a few hours she sinks into unconsciousness and thus slips out of the Templeton's story. Victoria and Vickie as their lives go on "will think a good deal about her and remember things they never noticed . . . they will regret that they heeded her so little; but they too, will look into the eager, unseeing eyes of young people and feel themselves alone."

"Obscure
Destinies"

For two years or more the former friends walk apart. To avoid meeting they take opposite sides of the street; or, meeting, pass in silence. A severe attack of pneumonia proves fatal to the banker. The cattleman orders flowers sent to the home. In a few weeks he disposes of all business affairs in the small town and goes to San Francisco, where at the end of nine years he, too, passes into the Great Beyond. In the contemplation of this ruptured tie "there is the feeling of something broken that could so easily have been mended; of something delightful that was senselessly wasted; of a truth that was accidentally distorted, one of the truths we want to keep."



PEKING PICNIC. By Ann Bridge. Boston.
Little, Brown & Co. 1932.

Preferences
of a Librarian
Rena Harrell

"There is no frigate like a book" . . . So said Emily Dickinson many years ago. Certainly, if one would be borne to Xanadu—old Peking—and forget the day's disaster in the sight of the pale tints of flowering fruit trees; in the odours of lilac and oleander; in watching long lines of camels bringing in coal from the hills, or bringing in burdens of silk, carpets, or fur from the Gobi Desert; in considering old gates and temples about which hang a glamour of past events; in hearing "winging music" made by flying birds which have small reeds fastened to their feathers—then read *Peking Picnic*, the second Atlantic \$10,000 prize novel. It's a story of legation life in China and reminds one of *The Lacquer Lady* which was about India and of *For the Benefit of Antonio* which was Italian in setting. Naturally, the characters are a sophisticated group. Nina Nevile and Laura LeRoy, whose husbands are attachés to the British Embassy in China; armorous La 'Touche of the French Embassy; Vinstead, an English Professor of Psychology; Miss Hande, an American who had a journalistic mind to see everything; Judith and Lilah Milne, nieces of Laura LeRoy; Chinese servants and a minor character or so.

There isn't much plot motivation. Nina Nevile's indiscreet picnic lasted several days at the temple of Chieh T'ai Ssu, around whose

ancient walls flower greenish white pear trees. Through the eyes of the party, the reader sees, in a long hall of the temple, an installation service for bonzes who wear gorgeously embroidered robes. Bandits steal into the temple enclosure and hold the party captive; so that it is only through the escape of Lilah (whose silence even was aggressive and whose observations, belying her looks, were always accurate) and the clever ingenuity of Laura, who, in order to gain time, turned the bandits to search for treasure in the wall until the French soldiers could come, that release was effected.

Preferences
of a Librarian

Ellery Sedgwick, editor of the Atlantic, in criticising the book says of Laura LeRoy: "Whether women will love Mrs. LeRoy, I don't know, but men will vote for her—if the ballot is secret. Perhaps she is more desirable than admirable. Probably she is more satisfactory as a heroine than she would be as a wife."

Personally, the Librarian feels that despite Laura's acknowledged liaisons with men other than her husband, she has much about her to call forth approval. For instance, one feels that she is right in being irritated at Miss Hande's smug American complacency about the United States' having no concessions in China, while we, as a nation, trade freely from those of the British who incur most of the odium. Of the French, Laura says that they are quite exact, perfectly correct, as clerks of God would be, while the English are like God Himself—patient, brooding, tender. One other insight into her mind and heart—quite the strongest passage in the book:

"*Can* one stop people being hurt? And had one better? Laura asked . . . In her experience all the richest and most valuable things were mixed up somehow or other with being hurt. Sooner or later everything that was nice hurt as well: love affairs hurt (like the devil), marriage hurt; children hurt . . . And directly *from* being hurt, it seemed to her, sprang all the qualities she valued most in others or herself—courage; a measure of insight, or self-knowledge; and the secret sense of strength, of the indestructibility of the human spirit in the face of disasters, which is the most precious possession of all. All these things could be had only at a price, and cash in advance at that—the price of being hurt again and again, and sometimes almost to the point of extinction. Happiness was the flaunting, homeward *flower* of the soul; but the root was pain, and the twin fruits knowledge and strength."

Preferences
of a Librarian

Miss Bridge's style is fresh and attractive. Anyone enjoys coming on such expression as this: "there was much to-ing and fro-ing," or such simile, "Touchy knew the country like the inside of his pocket." "Mental moratorium" is a delicious phrase, and I read twice the sentence about the night wind's blowing in through the French windows and having a room to itself. But not the least agreeable thing about the book is that despite the inclusiveness of *Good Earth* and other kindred works of earlier date, as to material on the customs and life of the Chinese, Ann Bridge finds new knowledge to bring her readers. The matter of giving directions, wherein the rider of a ricksha says to the coolie, "turn north . . . turn south" instead of "right" or "left" is a case in point. Definitely, though a first novel, *Peking Picnic* is a good novel. From the standpoint of atmosphere, chiefly.



THE LIFE OF CHRIST. By Lynn Ward.

Woodcuts
Carol Reeves

This is not a book of elegant words and phrases. It is far more simple than that. For it tells its great theme, not by that product of civilization, the pen; but reaches back through the ages for its medium, and unfolds in flowing elegance of line—a picture story.

Not one jumble of letters breaks the rhythm of imagery. Each page represents hours of meticulous labor with woodblock and instruments. The author's mastery of his tools and sympathetic conception of the subject is evident in each cut.

The book is convincingly complete. Page after page appears before the reader in exquisite black and white, presenting the Babe, the growing Boy, the Leader of men—loved, revered, and finally betrayed by His own to shameful death. The closing page glows with the splendor of His Resurrection. Perhaps the most beautifully-wrought cut of all is that of the towering camels of the Wise Men, hurrying toward the lights of Bethlehem, while the great star blazes above, the symbol of the First Christmas.

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